

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dedicated, Volunteer Weather Observers Needed

Residents of Michiana know that lake effect snow can be unpredictable at times. Our recent snowfall events have shown how accumulations can range from nothing at one location to well over a foot just a few short miles away. We also understand that in the summer, thunderstorms can dump several inches of rain in one place while other areas remain dry. Have you ever wondered who measures and reports this precipitation or why your location is never mentioned in the local news? Are you a weather enthusiast who might enjoy reading a rain gauge, measuring snow and reporting your observation each morning? If so, then you are exactly who the National Weather Service is looking for to expand a growing national network of volunteer weather observers called the *Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network*, known to most as CoCoRaHS.

CoCoRaHS is a nationwide program, located online at <http://www.cocorahs.org>, which offers an opportunity for anyone, young or old, to become a volunteer observer of rain, snow and even hail. Data collected by volunteer observers help many local, state and national organizations improve weather forecasts and warnings, ultimately helping save lives. Local television and radio stations as well as your local newspaper can use the reports to share information from rural and small communities as well as larger cities. Climatologists archive and study the records over time to look for changing weather patterns and historical trends. Your observations can be a significant contribution to the official climate record!

The National Weather Service Northern Indiana Office, the Indiana State Climate Office at Purdue, and CoCoRaHS Headquarters at Colorado State University are seeking volunteers to register for this program and begin taking observations right in your own

backyard. The only requirements to participate are the use of a specific type of rain gauge, access to the internet, and a desire to take weather observations while having fun.

CoCoRaHS came to Indiana in February of 2006 and now has over 900 observers of all ages from across the Hoosier State. Indiana was one of the first states in the Midwest to join this nationwide network which now consists of over 15,000 volunteers. **CoCoRaHS** is a volunteer, grass-roots network dedicated to the monitoring of precious water resources across the country and in Indiana. Organizations involved in agriculture, public safety, and natural resources management will find great benefit from this data, available free of charge to anyone through the CoCoRaHS network website.

CoCoRaHS represents an important new way to monitor rainfall and snowfall trends which can significantly impact our daily lives. Sam Lashley, Senior Meteorologist with the National Weather Service Northern Indiana office says the project helps forecasters and the local media understand where the most snow or rain falls and where the most significant impacts will occur. “We all know that lake effect snow may lead to 18 inches of accumulation in Benton Harbor while the sun shines in South Bend. CoCoRaHS observers help us see these differences and better understand how each community is being impacted. This can lead to improved weather watches, warnings and advisories.” Lashley also says, “Almost everyone is welcome to participate. Volunteers include senior citizens, children with interests in science, adult weather enthusiasts, schools and home schooled children.”

To sign up or to get additional information, just visit <http://www.cocorahs.org> . You may also contact Sam Lashley at the National Weather Service office via email (Sam.Lashley@noaa.gov), or by calling 574-834-1104.